

Best-Yet Turkey Chili

Serves 8 / Prep: 10 minutes / Cook: 40 minutes / Total: 50 minutes

Per serving (1 cup): Calories: 141 Total fat: 1g Sodium: 176mg Total carbs: 15g Sugar: 4g Fiber 4g Protein 19g

This meaty chili is hearty enough to fill you up on a cold winter day but lean enough in calories to help you meet your weight-loss goals. It has a balance of meat and beans that will please everyone in the crowd. The perfect blend of spices from the homemade Chili Powder (see below) and additional cumin give this chili flavor to delight your palate.

Ingredients:

Nonstick cooking spray

16-20oz extra-lean ground turkey

1 white onion, chopped

1 tbsp minced garlic

2 cups water

1 (28 ounce) can crushed tomatoes

1 (15 ounce) can red kidney beans, drained and rinsed

2 tbsp Chili Powder (see below)

½ tsp dried paprika

½ tsp dried oregano

½ tsp ground cumin

Directions:

1. Place a large pot over medium-high heat, and coat it with cooking spray. Add the ground turkey, and brown it for about 7 minutes, or until the turkey is no longer pink.
2. Add the onion and garlic to the pot, and sauté until the onion is tender, about 5 minutes.
3. Stir in the water, crushed tomatoes, kidney beans, chili powder, paprika, oregano and cumin until well combined.
4. Bring the liquid to a simmer, and then turn down the heat to low. Cook for about 30 minutes, until the chili is thick and no longer watery, and serve.

Post-op tip: you may find this well a tolerated staple during post-op. Add powdered eggs or an unflavored protein powder to get in additional grams of protein. To jazz up the recipe as you advance several months after surgery, top with low fat Greek yogurt, shredded cheese and chopped scallions. You could even try this poured over a quartered or halved baked potato.

Slow Cooker Chicken Taco Soup

Serves 10 / Prep: 15 minutes / Cook: 8 hours, 20 minutes / Total: 8 hours, 35 minutes

Per Serving (1 cup without add-ins): Calories: 125 Total fat: 1g Sodium: 583mg Total carbs: 11g Sugar 2g Fiber: 4g Protein: 18g

Ingredients:

1 1/5 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 (14.5 ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 (4.5 ounce) can chopped green chiles
¾ cup chopped onion
1 green bell pepper, chopped into ¼ inch pieces
4 tsp minced garlic
1 tbsp Chili Powder (see below)
1 tsp ground cumin
½ tsp ground coriander

Optional add-ins:

Chopped fresh cilantro
Sliced avocado
Shredded cheddar cheese
Low-fat plain Greek Yogurt

Directions:

1. Place the chicken breasts in the bottom of a slow cooker. Add the black beans, tomatoes, chiles, onion and bell pepper.
2. In a small bowl mix together the broth, water, garlic, chili powder, cumin and coriander. Pour the mixture over the chicken and vegetables in the slow cooker.
3. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours.
4. Prior to serving, transfer the chicken to a plate and shred it with a fork. Return it to the slow cooker for an additional 20 minutes so the meat can absorb some of the soup.
5. To serve, garnish each bowl with the cilantro, avocado, cheese and yogurt (if using).

Chili Powder (for Best-Yet Turkey Chili and Slow Cooker Chicken Taco Soup)

Makes 5 tablespoons / Prep: 5 minutes / Total: 5 minutes

2 ½ tbsp ground paprika

2 tsp dried oregano

1 ½ tsp ground cumin

1 ½ tsp garlic powder

1 ½ tsp ground cayenne pepper

¾ tsp onion powder

¼ tsp ground cloves

¼ tsp ground allspice

In a container with an airtight lid, combine the paprika, oregano, cumin, garlic powder, cayenne pepper, onion powder, cloves, and allspice. Put the lid on, give the container a few shakes, and store it in your pantry until ready to use.

Cauliflower “Mac” and Cheese

Serves 8 / Prep: 10 minutes / Cook: 45 minutes / Total: 55 minutes

Per Serving (1/2 cup): Calories: 147 Total fat: 7g Sodium: 263mg Total carbs: 8g Sugar 4g Fiber 2g Protein 13g

Mac and cheese is a staple for kids and adults alike. For many, it’s the ultimate comfort food. With all that high-fat cheese sauce and high-carb pasta, traditional versions are out of the question after bariatric surgery, but this recipe serves up a fantastic meal that’s sure to please kids of all ages. Enjoy this tasty dish as a side or the main event. This can easily be made ahead of time to enjoy at a later date, and it freezes well.

Ingredients:

- 1 head cauliflower, broken into florets
- 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese
- 1 cup low-fat plain Greek yogurt
- 1 egg
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- ½ tsp Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- 2 ounce (1/2 cup) shredded aged white cheddar cheese
- 2 ounce (1/2 cup) shredded cheddar cheese

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Fill a medium pot one-third full with water, and place a steamer basket inside. Bring the water to a boil over high heat.
3. Add the cauliflower to the steamer basket, cover the pot, and reduce the heat to a gentle boil. Steam the cauliflower for 10-15 minutes, or until the florets are soft. Alternatively, you can steam the cauliflower in the microwave for about 7 minutes.
4. While the cauliflower steams, in a medium bowl, mix together the cottage cheese, yogurt, egg, turmeric, mustard, and garlic powder.
5. Drain the cauliflower in a large colander and gently mash it with a potato masher to drain out excess water.
6. Stir the cauliflower pieces into the cottage cheese mixture. Add the cheddar cheese and mix well.
7. Transfer the cauliflower mixture to an 8-by-8-inch or 11-7-inch baking dish. Bake for about 30 minutes. The cauliflower “mac” and cheese is finished when the edges begin to brown.
8. Serve immediately.

Ingredient tip: instead of your traditional cheddar cheese, try something with a bit more flavor – Gruyere, aged cheddar, smoked Gouda, or Havarti. By using a more flavorful cheese, you may find yourself satisfied with a smaller portion of the finished recipe.

Grilled Honey Mustard Salmon

Serves 3 / Prep: 10 minutes, plus 30 minutes to 2 hours to marinate / Cook: 10 minutes / Total : 50 minutes at minimum

Per Serving (4 ounces): Calories: 174 Total fat: 4g Sodium: 151mg Total carbs: 13g Sugar: 9g Fiber: 0g Protein: 25g

Grilling is a favorite meal preparation method of many household chefs, and it doesn't have to be abandoned just because you aren't eating burgers, sausages, and ribs any longer. Grilling is a great method to prepare lean and flavorful proteins. This grilled salmon has a sweet and savory marinade, which will tantalize your taste buds. Turn up the grill and look out – the sweet smell might even bring the neighbors over.

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ tbsp honey
- 2 tbsp rice wine vinegar
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp extra-virgin olive oil
- Juice of ½ lemon
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp ground cayenne pepper
- 3 (4 ounce) salmon fillets, fresh or frozen, thawed

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the honey, vinegar, garlic, mustard, olive oil, lemon juice, black pepper, and cayenne pepper.
2. Put the salmon in a large zip-top bag, and pour the marinade into the bag. Shake the bag to coat the salmon in the marinade. Seal the bag and refrigerate for 30 minutes to 2 hours.
3. While the salmon marinates, preheat grill to medium heat, or prepare a charcoal grill. Lightly oil the grill grate so the fish won't stick as it cooks.
4. Place the salmon skin-side down on the grill and cook for about 8 minutes, until the fish flakes easily with a fork or reaches an internal temperature of 145°F, and serve.

Serving Tip: Serve this fish with steamed lentils and sautéed cherry tomatoes, spinach, and leeks. Look for precooked bags of steamed lentils in the produce section of the grocery store; they just need to be reheated before serving. Sauté the vegetables for 5-8 minutes to soften the leeks and tomatoes and wilt the spinach.

Peggy's Salmon Cakes

Serves 4 / Prep: 15 minutes / Cook: 10 minutes / Total: 25 minutes

Per Serving (1 patty): Calories: 145 Total fat: 5g Sodium: 638mg total carbs: 7g Sugar: 0g Fiber: 0g Protein: 18g

These salmon patties are tender and delicious. They can be mixed together ahead of time and baked the day of serving. Try topping them with a dill sauce made from low-fat plain Greek yogurt mixed with dried dill and garlic. As your post-op diet progresses, serve these salmon cakes with mixed vegetables and a small amount of a cooked grain, like protein-packed quinoa or high-fiber barley.

Ingredients:

- 1 (14.75 ounce) can wild pink salmon, drained
- ½ cup saltine cracker crumbs
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- ½ tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp ground paprika
- ½ tsp dried dill
- ½ tsp parsley flakes

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. In a medium bowl, use clean hands to mix together the salmon, cracker crumbs, eggs, salt, paprika, dill and parsley flakes until well combined.
3. Form the salmon mixture into 4 patties, and place on an ungreased 9-by-13-inch rimmed baking sheet.
4. Bake for 10 minutes, flipping the cakes over once after 5 minutes.
5. The salmon cakes are done when slightly browned on top. Serve immediately.

Did you know? Salmon is a superfood. It's well known for its high content of omega-3 fatty acids – important for not only heart but brain health as well. Additionally, salmon is a great source of Vitamin D. Vitamin D is normally made in our skin from the sun during peak hours of the day and year, but it's very difficult to get from dietary sources. People who struggle with obesity are at high risk for Vitamin D deficiency, and most are advised to take a supplement.

Tender Slow Cooker Chicken Tikka Masala

Serves 10 / Prep: 15 minutes / Cook: 4-8 hours / Total 4-8 hours

Per Serving (5 ounces): Calories: 207 Total fat: 3g Sodium: 622mg Total carbs: 12g Sugar: 5g Fiber: 2g Protein: 33g

Culinary delights from around the world are increasingly part of the typical American diet. Many are low calorie and healthy, while others are often prepared with high-fat ingredients like butter, cream, and lots of added sodium. This healthier twist on a popular Indian dish is sure to leave you feeling full and satisfied. The creamy tomato sauce is divine and keeps the chicken tender. With the addition of some simple seasoning, you can take a weeknight meal to whole new level of flavor.

Ingredients:

3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 large white onion, diced
2 tbsp minced ginger or 1 ½ tbsp ground ginger
1 (29 ounce) can tomato puree
1 ½ cups low-fat plain Greek yogurt, plus additional for garnish (optional)
2 tbsp garam masala
4 tsp minced garlic
1 tbsp ground cumin
2 tsp ground cayenne pepper
1 ½ tsp ground paprika
¾ tsp ground cinnamon
¾ tsp freshly ground black pepper
2 dried bay leaves
Chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish (optional)

Directions:

1. In the slow cooker, stir to combine chicken, onion, ginger, tomato puree, yogurt, garam masala, garlic, cumin, cayenne pepper, paprika, cinnamon, and black pepper, coating the breasts well.
2. Place the bay leaves on top of the mixture.
3. Cover and cook for 4 hours on high or 8 hours on low.
4. Remove the bay leaves. Stir the tikka masala with a wooden spoon, breaking up the chicken breasts. They should break apart easily.
5. Serve each portion garnished with a dollop of yogurt (if using) and a sprinkle of cilantro (if using).

Serving Tip: this low-carb dish is great all on its own, or, if tolerated, you can serve it over brown jasmine rice. Even better, try it over no-carb riced cauliflower. Don't forget the dollop of Greek yogurt on top for additional creaminess and protein.

Mixed Vegetable Stir-Fry with Sesame Tofu

Serves 6 / Prep: 15 minutes, plus 30 minutes to drain / Cook: 25 minutes / Total: 1 hour, 10 minutes

Per Serving (1 cup): Calories: 181 Total fat: 9g Sodium: 659mg Total carbs: 13g Sugar: 6g Fiber: 6g Protein: 12g

Many patients ask me for tips on getting more vegetables into their diets. It can be difficult post-op because most people tend to tolerate cooked vegetables better than raw vegetables, at least initially. Yet steamed vegetables get boring and bland after a while. Enter this delicious, flavorful stir-fry. And tofu is a great substitute for meat – it's heart healthy, loaded with protein, and inexpensive, and it soaks up the flavor of all the seasonings it's cooked in. When you use the extra-firm variety and sauté it, it even has the same texture as meat!

Ingredients:

- 1 (14 ounce) package extra-firm tofu
- 3 tsp sesame oil, divided
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds, plus additional for garnish
- 1 medium bok choy, stems chopped into 1/2 –inch pieces, leaves diced
- ½ large red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 red banana pepper
- 1 cup chopped broccoli florets
- 1 cup sugar snap peas
- 1 cup Quick Stir-Fry Sauce (see below)
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish

Directions:

1. Drain the tofu and place it in a paper towel-lined plate or bowl. Cover with several layers of paper towel or a clean dish towel, and set a can on top for added weight. Let the tofu sit for 30 minutes to drain some of its excess water.
2. Place the tofu on a clean cutting board. Halve lengthwise and cut into 1-by-2-inch cubes.
3. In a large nonstick pan over medium heat, heat 1 ½ tsp of sesame oil.
4. When the oil is very hot, add the tofu cubes and cook until lightly browned on all sides, 10-15 minutes. During the last 2 minutes, add the sesame seeds and stir frequently to prevent them from burning. Transfer the tofu and sesame seeds to a bowl and set aside.
5. In the same pan over medium heat, add the remaining 1 ½ tsp of sesame oil. Once the oil is very hot, add the bok choy, red bell pepper, banana pepper, broccoli, and snap peas. Cook, stirring frequently, for 10 minutes, until the vegetables are crisp-tender.
6. Add the stir-fry sauce and tofu to the pan, and stir to coat the tofu and vegetables.
7. Serve the stir-fry garnished with the cilantro and a sprinkle of sesame seeds.

Serving Tip: Try this stir-fry without serving over rice or noodles to keep it low carb. If you tolerate rice without issues, try limiting the rice to only a ¼ cup serving, and make sure to choose brown rice.

Quick Stir-Fry Sauce

Makes 2 cups / Prep: 10 minutes / Cook: 5 minutes / Total: 15 minutes

Per Serving (1/4 cup): Calories 93 Total fat: 5g Sodium: 846mg Total carbs: 10g Sugar: 4g Fiber 0g Protein: 2g

Ingredients:

½ cup low-sodium soy sauce
½ cup chicken or vegetable broth
3 tbsp catsup (free from high fructose corn syrup)
2 tbsp rice vinegar
1 tbsp sesame oil
1 tbsp brown sugar
1 ½ tsp honey
1 tsp srirachi or other hot sauce
¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
½ cup cold water
2 tbsp cornstarch
2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1 tbsp minced garlic
1 tsp ground ginger

Directions:

1. In a medium bowl, stir to combine the soy sauce, broth, catsup, rice vinegar, sesame oil, brown sugar, honey, sriracha, and pepper. Set aside.
2. In a small bowl, mix together the water and cornstarch until there are no lumps. Set aside.
3. In a small saucepan over medium heat, heat the olive oil. Sauté the garlic and ginger just until the oil begins to simmer, 1-2 minutes.
4. Whisk in the soy sauce mixture, and bring the liquid to a boil.
5. Slowly whisk in the cornstarch mixture. Cook the sauce for a few minutes more until it has thickened, stirring constantly.
6. Store the sauce in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week or freeze for up to 1 month. Reheat the sauce and stir well before using.

Chicken Caesar Wraps with Kale

Makes 5 wraps / Prep: 15 minutes / Total: 15 minutes

Per Serving (1 wrap): Calories 332 Total fat: 13g Sodium: 447mg Total carbs: 17g Sugar: 1g Fiber 9g Protein: 36g

Ingredients:

3 cups cooked chicken breast – grilled and sliced, canned, or shredded rotisserie chicken

1 cup chopped romaine lettuce

1 cup chopped kale leaves

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup low-fat Caesar dressing (see recipe below)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup shredded parmesan cheese

3 tbsp sunflower seeds

5 small 100% whole grain low-carb wraps, such as Tumaro's low-carb wraps

Directions:

1. In a large mixing bowl, mix to combine the chicken, romaine, kale, dressing, cheese and sunflower seeds. If you are concerned the kale is too tough, try mixing it with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of dressing 30 minutes prior to mixing it with the other ingredients to help soften the leaves.
2. Place about 1 cup of the salad mixture onto each wrap. Fold the wrap over the top of the salad, close in the sides, and then tightly roll the wrap closed. Use a toothpick to secure the wraps if needed and serve.

Low-Fat Caesar Dressing

Makes 1 cup / Prep: 10 minutes / Total: 10 minutes

Per Serving (2 tbsp): Calories: 48 Total fat: 4g Sodium: 111mg Total carbs: 2 g Sugar: 1g Fiber: 0g Protein: 4g

Ingredients:

- ½ cup low-fat plain Greek yogurt
- ½ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- ¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- ¼ cup low-fat milk
- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 anchovy fillets, jarred or canned
- 2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp onion powder
- ½ tsp freshly ground pepper

Directions:

In a blender or food processor, puree the yogurt, cheese, lemon juice, milk, olive oil, anchovies, Worcestershire sauce, garlic, mustard, onion powder, and pepper on medium-speed until the dressing is smooth and creamy without any lumps.

Easy Salmon Patties (Cakes)

Makes 7 patties / Prep: 10 minutes / Cook: 10 minutes / Total: 20 minutes

Per serving (1 patty): Calories: 117 Fat: 8g Sodium: 159mg Total Carbs: 0.5g Sugar: 0g Fiber: 0g Protein: 10.5g

Ingredients:

1 can wild salmon (14.75 ounces)
1 egg, beaten
2 tbsp grated shallot
1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
1 tbsp mayonnaise
1 tbsp minced chives
1 tbsp minced dill
1 tbsp minced parsley
1 tsp Dijon mustard
¼ tsp each salt and pepper
Pinch cayenne
2 tbsp olive oil

Topping:

4 oz Greek yogurt
Juice from ½ lemon
½ tsp minced dill

Instructions:

1. Drain salmon, then remove and discard any bones or cartilage. Transfer salmon to medium bowl and flake salmon into small chunks using a fork. Add egg, shallot, lemon juice, mayonnaise, chives, dill, parsley, Dijon, salt, pepper and cayenne to salmon and mix until thoroughly combined.
2. Using a ¼ cup measure, scoop level amount of salmon mixture and form into a patty 2 ½ inches in diameter and ½ inch thick; transfer to a plate and repeat with remaining mixture.
3. Heat a 12 inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add 1 tbsp oil and heat until shimmering. Place half of the salmon patties in skillet and cook, without moving, until golden brown, 2-2 ½ minutes. Carefully flip patties and cook until second side is golden brown, 2-2 ½ minutes. Transfer patties to a wire rack.
4. Wipe out skillet with a paper towel and repeat process with the remaining tbsp oil and salmon patties
5. Mix Greek yogurt, lemon juice and dill until well combined. Spoon as desired over prepared patties.